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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#) [DOMESTIC](#) [POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION REACHES PARLIAMENT

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Willeah E. Cato for Reasons 1  
.5 (b,d)

11. (U) Summary: After years of internal debate, amendments to Yemen's 1992 gun control law have received Cabinet approval and been referred to Parliament for final passage. However, the absence of official comment of late may signal their relegation to the bottom of the pile. Prospects for adoption of an improved law may improve after the April elections, but action on MANPADs is likely to continue as an entirely separate program. End summary.

12. (U) As part of the ongoing ROYG counterterrorism initiative, the Yemeni Cabinet has approved a series of amendments designed to enable Law 40 for the year 1992 to regulate possession and trafficking in weapons, ammunitions, and fireworks more effectively. The amendments were drafted during 2002 and their swift approval was due, in part, to increased political concern after a 2002 ROYG report to Parliament on terrorist operations and activities in Yemen.

13. (C) In their current form, these amendments will, among other things, permit the expansion and duplication of programs like the Sanaani licensing initiative. Established by Presidential decree in 1999, this program has notably increased ROYG control and supervision of weapons inside and transiting through the capital city of Sana'a. The implementation of such a program in other regions of concern would be a significant achievement for ROYG's counterterrorism efforts.

14. (C) Before these amendments can be written into law, Parliament must complete a series of constitutional procedures. The Cabinet has assigned oversight of the legislative process to both the Minister of Legal Affairs and the Minister of State for Parliament and Shura Affairs. Nevertheless, the recent absence of official comment, either in support of or against the legislation, may signal a political impasse.

15. (C) Comment: Law 40 has remained controversial throughout the last decade. Although successive Ministers of Interior have complained about its weakness and expressed frustration at their inability to implement gun control nationwide, tribal MPs and senior officials, especially Parliamentary Speaker Sheikh al-Ahmar, have held any revision in limbo for years. Sheikh al-Ahmar continues to publicly oppose amending Law 40, alluding to the possession of weapons as a symbol of Yemeni manhood. Even heightened security concerns may thus prove insufficient to ensure its passage, especially preceding this April's parliamentary elections. Prospects could improve after the elections, particularly if al-Ahmar is replaced with a more reform-minded Speaker. The ROYG views MANPADs as a particular concern, but is likely to continue its well-established buy-back program as an initiative separate from the gun control legislation. End comment.

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